

THE BOOK OF RUTH

INTRODUCTION, CRITICALLY-REVISED TEXT,
CRITICAL NOTES, TRANSLATION, AND
EXPLANATORY NOTES

BY

LOUIS BERNARD WOLFENSON, M.A.

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Baltimore, Maryland (February, 1907)

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PREFACE

The following material is a reworking and abstract of several sections of the Introduction of the dissertation as presented to the Board of University Studies of the Johns Hopkins University. The contents of the dissertation in full were as follows:

INTRODUCTION.

- Section 1: The Character of the Book.
- Section 2: The Contents of the Book.
- Section 3: The Place of the Book in the Canon.
- Section 4: The Place of the Book in Edd. and MSS.
- Section 5: The Date and Origin of the Book.
- Section 6: The Purpose of the Book.
- Section 7: The Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions.

CRITICALLY REVISED TEXT.

CRITICAL AND PHILOLOGICAL NOTES.

- Notes on Chap. 1.
- Notes on Chap. 2.
- Notes on Chap. 3.
- Notes on Chap. 4.

TRANSLATION.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

- Notes on Chap. 1.
- Notes on Chap. 2.
- Notes on Chap. 3.
- Notes on Chap. 4.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

The first three parts of the following matter were published in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, Vol. XXVII, July, 1911, pp. 285-300, under the title "The Character, Contents, and Date of Ruth"; the last part, in somewhat different form, will be published in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April, 1912.

L. B. WOLFENSON

MADISON, WIS.
December, 1911



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BY DR. LOUIS BERNARD WOLFENSON

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE BOOK

When Ernest Renan spoke of Ecclesiastes as the only charming book that was written by a Jew,¹ one is tempted to remark that he cannot have known or appreciated the Book of Ruth. In this short narrative of only four chapters we have, certainly, the most charming and attractive story of the whole of extant ancient Hebrew literature. Goethe says² that the Book of Ruth is "das lieblichste kleine Ganze, das uns episch und idyllisch überliefert worden ist."

While Ecclesiastes attracts thinkers,³ there is little that is really charming about the book. It has come down to us as a confused conglomeration of precepts hardly intelligible without a thorough-going rearrangement and editing⁴ such as Renan at least never knew. Ruth, on the contrary, has reached us in as perfect a state as perhaps any text of the Old Testament. The story is clear throughout,

¹ *L'Antichrist*, p. 101: *livre charmant, le seul livre aimable, qui été composé par un Juif*. Cheyne says (*Job and Solomon*, p. 244): "M. Renan, in fact, seems to me at once to admire Kohelet too much and to justify his admiration on questionable grounds."

² *Westöstlichen Divan*, Dunker's ed. of Goethe's *Werke*, p. 217, *HEBRÄER: Beispiels willen jedoch gedenken wir des Buches Ruth, welches bei seinem hohen Zweck einem Könige von Israel anständige, interessante Voreltern zu verschaffen, zugleich als das lieblichste kleine Ganze, etc.*

³ Cf. Haupt, "Ecclesiastes," *Amer. Jour. of Philology*, Vol. XXVI, 2 [102], pp. 125, 126.

⁴ Cf. Professor Haupt's rearrangement cited above.

although some details are more or less obscure, and can be read easily, requiring little study to appreciate the account.

The book is not stored with political or national history, nor yet with moral precepts, which we find in other narrative writings of the ancient Israelites, but depicts the human vicissitudes and homely virtues of love and constancy of the ancestors of David, the great King of the Hebrews. Incidentally, customs of the day are faithfully represented. Just what institutions these customs evidence, is the obscure part of the book. But this detracts but little from its beauty and the readiness with which the story itself may be understood. In its simplicity and love of detail⁵ it is epic⁶ in character. It might well be an episode from some great epic.

The clash of arms, the diplomacies of statecraft, and the warning prophecies of prophets shaping the policy of the nation are alike absent from this idyl—as the work is fitly styled by many. The atmosphere of the Book of Ruth is redolent of ripening corn, mown grain, and merry shouts of reapers as they gather the golden harvest. And so it has come about that the story of Ruth and Boaz has become typical of the restful quiet of country life and of harvest-time and plentiful crops.⁷

Among Jews the Book of Ruth is read at the feast of Pentecost, which was the corn-harvest festival of Palestine,⁸ marking the close of the grain-harvest which concluded with the wheat-gathering (cf. Ruth 2:23). The connection of the book with the harvest is found in the fact that the scene of the story proper is laid in the harvest-season, while the action is for the most part bound up with the harvesting.

⁵ For instances of this, cf. the scene where Boaz comes to the field in chap. ii. In vs. 6 we find a repetition of the same wording as in vs. 5: thus vs. 5, "And he said to the young man placed over the reapers," and vs. 6, "And the young man placed over the reapers made answer and said." For "made answer and said" as an epic touch, cf. the Homeric, "Him (her) then answered and said," e.g., *Odyssey*, 19, 405, Τὴν δ' αὖτ' Ἀντόλυκος ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε, which occurs often (thus or with some variation in words in other passages, e.g., *Od.* 7, 207).

⁶ This is not in any wise inconsistent with the character of the composition as an idyl, since the idyl is a form of epic; cf. Gummere, *Handbook of Poetics*³, Boston, 1898, p. 30.

⁷ References to the characters of Ruth are not infrequent in literature. W. E. Addis, *The Book of Job and the Book of Ruth* (Temple Bible), London and Philadelphia, 1902, gives a number (at the end of the book). For references in German, cf. Reuss, *Geschichte des A.T.*, Braunschweig, 1890, pp. 312, 313.

⁸ Cf. Exod. 34:22; Lev. 23:15 ff.; Deut. 16:9 ff., 16; II Chron. 8:13.

II. CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The first chapter is introductory. In consequence of a severe famine in the period of the Judges, Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and his two sons *Maḥlon* and *Chilion*, left Bethlehem of Judah to sojourn in Moab. There, after a time, Elimelech died, and his sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. After about ten years Maḥlon and Chilion also died. Naomi then proceeded to return to Bethlehem. With her, Ruth and Orpah set out, but the latter, at Naomi's solicitations, turned back. Ruth persisted in following her mother-in-law, and the two arrived in Bethlehem at the commencement of the barley-harvest.

The second chapter relates the gleanings of Ruth on Boaz' field. She came to his field by chance. Arriving from Bethlehem, Boaz espied Ruth gleanings and treated her with great kindness. He personally attended to her welfare and protection and supplied her with enough food for herself and mother-in-law. At night on learning of the reception accorded her, Naomi advised Ruth to remain on Boaz' field; and she gleaned thus throughout the entire harvest, dwelling with Naomi.

In the third chapter Ruth carries out the plan of her mother-in-law to get a home for her. As Boaz is a relative of Naomi's husband, he must redeem Elimelech's estate. Ruth visits Boaz on the threshing floor, where the grain is winnowed, that night. Awakened about midnight, Boaz finds Ruth beside him and questions her. He promises to help her and do as she requests, provided a nearer relative, with a previous claim, does not exercise his right. Ruth remains until morning with Boaz, when he presents her with six measures of barley to supply the wants of his relatives.

In the last chapter Boaz redeems his promise and marries Ruth. At the city-gate he finds the nearer relative and in the presence of ten elders explains the conditions with regard to the estate of Elimelech and the necessity of redeeming Ruth with it. Being unable to redeem, he relinquished his claims; whereupon Boaz declared he would buy the estate for himself. All present blessed Boaz and Ruth, and the pair were married. Of this union was born Obed, father of Jesse, father of King David. A genealogy of David's line closes the book.

III. THE DATE AND ORIGIN

The opening words of Ruth, "In the days when the Judges exercised authority," place the events of the book in the age of the Judges. The account, however, may have been written by an author at a much later day, although Jewish tradition⁹ has it that our book, together with the books of Judges and Samuel, was written by Samuel.

It is quite impossible that Samuel wrote the book (or books) bearing his name and it is quite improbable, if not impossible, that he wrote Ruth and Judges; still it is not impossible that the Jewish legend is right in ascribing an early origin to the Book of Ruth in common with the other two books. In accord with this an early date for Ruth was accepted by Keil,¹⁰ Cassel,¹¹ and C. H. H. Wright.¹² Davidson¹³ placed the date of the writing of the book in the time of Hezekiah, whom Sennacherib, King of Assyria (705-681 B.C.), shut up in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage." Ed. Reuss¹⁴ dated the book in the same period.

Other scholars believe the Book of Ruth was of later origin: (1) later in the period of the Kings but still before the Exile, (2) during the Exile, (3) or even after the Exile. As representatives of the first of these views, Oettli¹⁵ and Strack¹⁶ may be mentioned. Driver,¹⁷ too, places the book in the pre-Exilic period. As assigning

⁹ Talmud (Jerusalem), *Bab. Bath.*, 14b.

¹⁰ *Commentary on Judges and Ruth*², 1874 (1st ed., 1863).

¹¹ *Das Buch der Richter u. Ruth*², Bielefeld u. Leipzig, 1887, pp. 262 f. He believed Ruth was written in the reign of King David at the time of the height of his splendor (p. 264b).

¹² *The Book of Ruth in Hebrew* . . . (Williams and Norgate), London and Leipzig, 1864, Intro., p. xliv. Here Wright makes the date "not later than the time of David." In his *Introduction to the Old Test.*², London, 1891 (1st ed., 1890), Wright stated, "No certain date can be assigned . . . , only that it must have been written after the time of David and long prior to the Exile."

¹³ *Introduction to the Old Test.* (3 vols.) (Williams & Norgate), Edinburgh, Vol. I, 1862, pp. 482 ff.

¹⁴ *Geschichte der Heiligen Schriften des Alten Test.*², p. 314, § 244.

¹⁵ In his commentary on Ruth in *Die geschichtlichen Hagiographen und das Buch Daniel* von Oettli u. Meinhold (Strack und Zöckler's kurzgefasster Kommentar), Nördlingen, 1889, pp. 215 ff.

¹⁶ *Einleitung in das Alte Test.*⁵, München, 1898, p. 142.

¹⁷ *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Test.*¹⁰ (*LOT*¹⁰), New York, 1902, p. 455. Driver says, "It seems to the writer that the general beauty and purity of style of Ruth point more decidedly to the pre-exilic period than do the isolated expressions quoted [a number of supposed late and Aramaic words] to the period after the exile."

Ruth to the period of the Exile, I may mention Ewald¹⁸ and König.¹⁹ The latter, however, believed it was only the final redaction of the book which fell in the period of the Exile—the first reduction to writing was more ancient (*einer älteren Schriftlichmachung*),²⁰ and this reduction to writing came only after a period of oral transmission as a folk-story ("im Volksmunde"). With this long period of oral transmission together with his belief that the story rests upon a historical foundation, König may be said actually to regard the origin of the book as early in the period of the Kings.²¹

The majority of modern writers, however, assign Ruth to the post-Exilic period. Of those who have adopted this view there may be mentioned Bertholdt,²² Bertheau,²³ Schrader,²⁴ Graetz,²⁵ Kuenen,²⁶ Wellhausen,²⁷ Orelli,²⁸ Budde,²⁹ Wildeboer,³⁰ Bertholet,³¹ Nowack,³² Cheyne,³³ Winckler,³⁴ Haupt,³⁵ Cornill,³⁶ etc.

¹⁸ *Geschichte Israels*, I, 225.

¹⁹ *Einleitung in das Alte Test.*, Bonn, 1893, p. 287: *exilischen Herstellung*.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 286. (The word *Schriftlichmachung* is unusual. Professor Haupt remarks of this use here that it is strange and that *Aufzeichnung* would be better.) Similar to König's view is Orelli's, but he places the final redaction after the Exile; cf. below, n. 28.

²¹ Redpath, also, in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, Vol. IV, art. "Ruth," p. 316 (Date of the Book), would assign the book to this period. He says, "It claims no particular date for itself, though the style would lead us to assign it to a comparatively early one."

²² *Einleitung*, pp. 231 ff.

²³ *Das Buch Richter und Ruth*, Leipzig, 1883, p. 290.

²⁴ In de Wette-Schrader, *Lehrbuch der hist.-krit. Einleitung*⁸, Berlin, 1869, p. 395: *Es ist am wahrscheinlichsten in die erste Zeit nach dem Exil zu verlegen, als durch Serubbabel (Hagg. I, 14. II, 3, 22. Sach. IV, 9) die Blicke wiederum auf das Davidische Haus gelenkt waren.*

²⁵ *History of the Jews* (Eng. translation of the Jewish Publication Society of America), Vol. I, Philadelphia, 1891, pp. 370, 411.

²⁶ *Onderzoek*, I, pp. 212, 214: the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

²⁷ Bleek-Wellhausen, *Einleitung in das Alte Test.*⁴, Berlin, 1878, pp. 204, 205; Wellhausen, *Composition des Hexateuchs u. der hist. Bücher des Alten Test.*², Berlin, 1889, pp. 357-59: *Nach dem Exil*.

²⁸ In *Protestant. Realencycl.*², Vol. XIII, art. "Ruth," p. 142; ³, Vol. XVII, Leipzig, 1906, pp. 267 f.

²⁹ In *ZAT*, XII, 1892, pp. 37-59, *Vermutungen zum "Midrasch des Buches der Könige," III*. *Book of Ruth*, pp. 43-46: *späte Abfassungszeit*, p. 43 below.

³⁰ *Die Literatur des Alten Test.*, Göttingen, 1895, pp. 341 ff.

³¹ *Das Buch Ruth* (in *Fünf Megill.*), *Einleitung*, pp. 50, 51 f.

³² *Richter-Ruth*, *Einleitung zu Ruth*, pp. 180 ff.

³³ In *Encycl. Biblica*, Vol. IV, art. "Ruth," cols. 4167, 4168.

³⁴ In *Altorientalische Forschungen*, III¹ (1901), Leipzig, 1902, "Ruth," pp. 65 ff.; II (1898-1900), Leipzig, 1901, pp. 232, 504.

³⁵ In the interpretation of the Book of Ruth in the Old Test. Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University, session of 1904-5.

³⁶ *Einleitung*⁶, Tübingen, 1905, § 22, 2, 3, pp. 158, 159.

The assumption of a post-Exilic date, which is thus the most widely prevalent view at present, rests on general indications. Of these there are but five that possess any weight, and they are as follows:

1. The opening words of the book, *In the days when the Judges exercised authority*. This places the narration at a point subsequent to the events related, so that the narrator views the period as a completed whole. Further, the quiet and peace pervading the Book of Ruth is in striking contrast to the turbulent and unsettled age of the Judges. It is urged that only a very late writer (no longer realizing the incongruity of a peaceful state, such as portrayed in Ruth, in the days of the Judges) could have represented the events of our book in that age. If actually written at an early date, the book would reflect the spirit of the times, or at least the state of affairs would not have been depicted as calm and restful.

2. The genealogy in 4:18-22 indicates by its style and formularistic character, which it has in common with the Priestly Code (P), that the book is at least as late as P. No writer before the Exile would have used אֵלֶּה הַדּוֹלֵדוֹת, "these are the generations," as an introductory formula for the genealogical table, and הוֹלִיד, "he begot," in the table itself. Wellhausen has pointed out that the genealogy, which represents Salmon as the father of Bethlehem (Boaz), could not be pre-Exilic, for Salmon was not considered the father of Bethlehem until after the Exile.³⁷

3. The passage 4:7, relating what was customary in Israel "formerly," לְפָנֵינוּ, indicates that when this was written, the custom was long since past. The practice alluded to, the drawing off of the shoe, is the same as the *ḥaliṣah* of Deut. 25:9, 10; and this could not have been forgotten as long as the practice of Deuteronomy was known. The explanation of 4:7, however, proves that the custom was no longer known. Now the only conceivable period when this custom could have died out and been spoken of as existing "formerly," לְפָנֵינוּ, is after the Exile, which disrupted the whole life of Israel. Containing such an explanation, Ruth therefore was written at a time when the explanation was necessary, and this was after the Exile.

³⁷ Cf. I Chron. 2:54 (Professor Haupt).

4. In the Jewish arrangement of biblical books, Ruth is found in the third division or **כְּתוּבִים**, "Writings." This indicates a late origin; for if the book had been in existence when the collection of **נְבִיאִים** was formed, it would appear among the "Prophets." To be sure, Ruth is placed after Judges in the LXX, etc., but this, it is urged, is a later practice.

5. Lastly, the linguistic peculiarities and affinities of our book are said to be distinctly late. The few expressions occurring in Ruth which are found elsewhere only in the oldest writings may be due to conscious borrowing to give an archaic flavor, but the presence of words found elsewhere only in Aramaic, together with the use of words in senses in which they are found only in late Hebrew or Aramaic, precludes the possibility of an early date and compels us to assign a late date.

A consideration of the foregoing alleged indications of late date of the Book of Ruth will reveal the fact that the first four are absolutely inconclusive or no arguments for a late origin: the supposed indications can be accounted for equally well, or much better, otherwise. The arguments will be considered in the order given.

1. While it is true that *In the days when the Judges exercised authority* points to a date subsequent to the age of the Judges, such a date need not be later than the date of the Judaic (J) document, or about 850 B.C., which is long enough after the days of the Judges to justify the statement quoted, being at least a century and a half after that time. Then, too, the opening words may be due to later redaction, let us say of the time of the "Deuteronomistic" editing of JE, i.e., the reworking of the Judaic and Ephraimitic histories of the Hebrew people to conform to Deuteronomy. The Book of Ruth may have formed an episode in the history which was, perhaps at the time of this editing, broken up into books or new divisions; and our book on being taken out of its old connection had the words **וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שְׁפַט הַשְּׁפָטִים** added to convert the episode into an independent book. That Ruth was once a part of the JE history, or at least of J, will be shown below (see p. 298); here it is sufficient to point out that the words quoted do not necessarily indicate a late date—are perfectly consistent with a date as early as 850 B.C.

The peaceful and settled character of the events portrayed in

Ruth, also, is not at all incompatible with their having been enacted in the period of the Judges. The life of the people in Palestine and Judah at that time was not uninterruptedly unsettled and warlike. As Oettli³⁸ and Strack³⁹ have pointed out, there were periods in the age of the Judges which were entirely peaceful and quiet. Oettli justly compares the various intervals of peace during the Thirty-Years' War, and Strack draws attention to the repeated notices of peaceful and secure periods during the time of the Judges, found in the book itself, e.g., 3:11, 30, etc.

But to this Nowack replies that while there may well have been some peaceful intervals, life during the whole age of the Judges was not pervaded with a well-grounded sense of order as is manifested at every turn in the Book of Ruth, dominating the conduct of every character. In short, "Yahwism" pervades and dominates the life and thought of everyone, cf. 1:8 f., 13, 16 f., 20 f.; 2:4, 12, 20; 3:10, 13; 4:11 f., 14. Yahwism, however, was established in the days of the Judges just as much as a number of centuries later, especially as Yahweh was the national God, and Bethlehem and Judah his natural home. It must be remembered that there is as much Yahwism in the Judaic document and in the oldest portions of Judges as in Ruth;⁴⁰ and the song of Deborah, the earliest bit of Hebrew literature, might be considered late on the same basis of Yahwism.⁴¹

Nor can it be objected that the "Yahwism" in this song and in Judges in general is of a different character from that in Ruth, for we must remember the different character of different events. If Deborah could sing (Judg. 5:2) *Praise ye Yahweh for the avenging of Israel* (cf. also vs. 3), are we to suppose that the characters of Ruth say anything but that which is equally customary and appropriate in the same age, but under different circumstances, when they say *Yahweh be with you*, etc. (2:4; cf. Judg. 1:19)? And again, is it any more a late conception of Yahweh when Naomi says (Ruth 1:8) *May Yahweh deal graciously with you*, than when Jephthah says (Judg. 11:27) *May Yahweh, the Judge, decide to-day between the*

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 214.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁴⁰ Cf. Judg. 1:19, and *Yahweh was with Judah* (J); 2:20 (E), 23 (J); 3:20 (E), 28 (J); 4:6, 14, 15 (JE); 8:8 (J); 11:10 (J), 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 36 (all E); *et passim*, frequently (analysis of Nowack).

⁴¹ Cf. Judg. 5:2, 3, 5, 11, 13, 23, 31. Verses, or parts, assigned by Nowack to other documents than J are not referred to here.

Israelites and Moab (as Nowack reads for Ammon of ~~the~~)? It is unnecessary to multiply comparisons further: there is just as much Yahwism in Judges as in Ruth.

As for the settled customs in the Book of Ruth to which allusion is made, they are of the most primitive and such as are perfectly congruent with a wild age such as Judges presupposes. The institutions of redemption of property and the inheritance of women, which alone figure in our book—the levirate nowhere plays a part⁴²—are certainly primitive enough and smack more of the tribal ties of the desert than of civilization.⁴³ Accordingly, neither the opening words of Ruth nor the picture of life in Bethlehem as represented in the book can be used in any way as evidence of its late date, as Nowack argues.

2. The genealogy, 4:18–22, certainly cannot be considered early; and if a genuine portion, would prove Ruth to be of late date. However, the table is palpably not a part of the book, as Driver,⁴⁴ König,⁴⁵ and Bertholet⁴⁶ have pointed out. Also Nowack grants the possibility of the genealogy being a late addition. This argument for a late date is therefore void.

3. The late character of 4:7, however, has been emphasized by both Nowack and Bertholet as an indication of late date. They believe the drawing off of the shoe referred to here and the custom of Deut. 25:9 are identical. An explanation like that of Ruth 4:7 would be necessary only in case of an obsolete custom. The only period when this ancient custom could have been discontinued and forgotten was after the Exile, which changed the whole life of the people, argue the proponents of a late date. No reason, however, exists for believing that any of the long-established and vital social customs of the Hebrews, such as the levirate, were discontinued. We know that Ezra and Nehemiah enforced all the practices enjoined by the Law; and the levirate and *ḥaliṣah* were in force long centuries after the Exile. The drawing off of the shoe was therefore not forgotten.

⁴² In a future paper I hope to show that the levirate is a late institution with the Hebrew people.

⁴³ The inheritance of women, implied and referred to in 3:2 and 4:10, was a tribal custom of the Arabs until forbidden by Mohammed, Qurān 4:23, 26; and was still in vogue among the Hebrews in the early monarchy, cf. I Kings 2:22.

⁴⁴ *LOT*¹⁰, pp. 455 f.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 287.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 51, 7; 68 f.

The point here is that the drawing off of the shoe in legal transfer of property is something entirely different from that prescribed in Deut. 25:9, which was known in later times as the *ḥalîṭah*. The custom of drawing off the shoe in legal transfer of property was much older than the custom of the levirate, which is apparently of later origin among the Hebrews. It would seem that the shoe was, in ancient times, considered a symbol of possession; and drawing it off, symbolic of renunciation of that possession. Hence its applicability in legal transfer. Such a symbolism is found also among the ancient Hindoos in the great epic of Valmiki, the *Rāmāyana*, Book II, Canto cxii,⁴⁷ when Bharata goes to summon Rāma, his brother and the rightful possessor of the throne, to Ayodhyā. Rāma refuses to return, and taking off his gold-embroidered shoes, presents them to Bharata as a token of his renunciation of the inheritance. Bharata returns to Ayodhyā and places Rāma's shoes on the throne as a symbol of possession and authority at his side when dispensing justice, etc.

The custom of drawing off the shoe in transfer of property was, accordingly, anciently prevalent. Gradually, even before the Exile, this primitive practice, brought into Palestine from the desert perhaps, began to die out; and when the Exile came, it died out completely in this connection and was forgotten by most people, since, in the Captivity, Babylonian practices prevailed. After the Exile, therefore, the reference in Ruth 4:8 was no longer understood, because the custom survived only in connection with the levirate; and so some late reader, or perhaps scribe, who still knew of the old practice, inserted a gloss (4:7) to explain the allusion.⁴⁸ On critical grounds also, this verse must be considered a gloss, as it interrupts the connection.

An argument for a late date of Ruth from 4:7 is therefore impossible.

4. The argument for a late date of our book from its place in the third division of the Jewish Bible is absolutely worthless. It is certain that no collection of Prophets or Hagiographa was in existence until long after *all* the books were written. The Talmud, *Bab. Bath.*, 13^b, proves that, up to about 150 A.D., all books were separate

⁴⁷ English trans. by Ralph T. H. Griffith, London, 1895.

⁴⁸ Driver, also, quite correctly pointed out (*LOT*¹⁰, p. 455) that 4:7 is a late explanatory gloss.

volumes. The classification into Prophets and Hagiographa of the Jewish Scriptures can be proved to be entirely late and arbitrary, and can therefore indicate nothing as to the real date of origin of any book of the Old Testament.

5. The theory of a late date of the Book of Ruth rests, accordingly, exclusively on the indication found in the alleged presence of Aramaisms and late diction in the book. With the more accurate philological knowledge of the last few decades the number of these has been shown to be more restricted than was at first assumed;⁴⁹ and of those still cited as clearly late or Aramaic, which number six or seven all told, there is not one which cannot be equally well or better regarded as good Hebrew usage or otherwise accounted for.

With the removal of the necessity of recognizing any word or expression in the genuine portions of the Book of Ruth as being late or an Aramaism, the only valid evidence of a late date, and the only insurmountable obstacle to assigning an early one, is removed. We are free, therefore, to assume an early origin with Jewish tradition and a considerable number of modern scholars. Such an assumption is supported by so much good evidence that I believe an early date can be regarded as proved. The evidence is as follows:

1. While there is not one word or expression in the genuine portions of Ruth which is late, Driver has pointed out (*LOT*¹⁰, p. 454) that "the general Hebrew style (the idioms and syntax) shows no marks of deterioration; it . . . stands on a level with the best parts of Samuel." There are present a relatively large number of words and usages which are paralleled only in the earliest Hebrew literature. This cannot be a matter of chance and imitation as Nowack explains: in a book of only four chapters the presence of so many old and classical usages indicates unmistakably that the book is ancient and not late.⁵⁰ (For a list of such usages and forms, see Driver, *LOT*¹⁰, p. 454 [note †].)

⁴⁹ Lists of linguistic peculiarities and Aramaisms are given by A. B. Davidson, *Introduction*, Vol. I, pp. 432 ff.; König, *Einleitung*, p. 286; Bertheau, *op. cit.*, p. 286; Driver, *LOT*¹⁰, p. 455; Bertholet, *op. cit.*, p. 50, 4; Nowack, *op. cit.*, p. 180, 1; Cheyne, *Encycl. Bibl.*, IV, col. 4168. One word רַחֵם, 1:13, considered irrefutably an Aramaism because incorrectly rendered *therefore*, can be only Hebrew in this sense, by its derivation.

⁵⁰ The Benedictine Calmet, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1722 (quoted by Cheyne, *Encycl. Bibl.*, IV, col. 4168), believed that Ruth was written by the same author as the Book of Samuel because of the many relationships between the style of Ruth and Samuel. A complete discussion of Aramaisms, forms, etc., is reserved for a special paper.

2. There are a number of linguistic and graphic peculiarities that fall in the realm of grammatical forms which have been variously explained, but which are most consistently accounted for as early forms. Some of these, as, for example, the forms of the second person sing., perf. and impf., in 3:3, 4; 2:8, 21; 3:4, 18, are also found in late texts; however, with other evidences of early date, are better explained as early forms. On the other hand, certain forms of the pronouns, as the longer form of those of the first person and the relative, are definitely early. Likewise the frequent occurrence of *scriptio defectiva*, while in later times the tendency was toward an excessive use of *scriptio plena*, is an evidence of early date. The few cases of *scriptio plena*, as in וְרֹתֶם־מִדֹּד, 2:7, and the Aramaic spelling in מִרְיָא, 1:20, are satisfactorily explained as introduced by late scribes under the influence of their own time. It is, however, highly improbable, if not impossible, that, were Ruth late, the scribes (or author) should have introduced so many *defective*-writings.

3. Besides linguistic and graphic evidence, our book presents not a little internal evidence which compels us to assign an early date. The general tone of the book, the customs and atmosphere, are positively pre-Deuteronomistic. The indications of this are:

a) The arrival of Naomi and Ruth from Moab, 1:23, is "at the beginning of the harvest of barley." This time was just when the Passover began in Palestine. At no period of Israelitish history would a writer have neglected to mention the Passover, unless this feast as the celebration of the commencement of the spring harvest (cf. Deut., chap. 16) had not yet been established. The writer who described the arrival of the two women as above must have lived in the age before the establishment of the Passover, which was in the pre-Deuteronomistic era.

b) The manner of conducting the harvest as related in chap. 2 is likewise pre-Deuteronomistic. Boaz employs his hand-maidens to work in the field. In view of the fact that the harvesters were men employed to reap, etc., it seems certain that the women can have been engaged only in picking up what was left on the field by the reapers and in making up bundles (sheaves). But picking up what was left was contrary to the law of Deut. 24:19, and therefore the book must have been written at a time when the law of Deuteronomy

was not yet established. Moreover, the stress laid upon Ruth's finding some well-disposed person who would permit her to glean, 2:22; the prominence with which it is brought out that Ruth asked permission to glean, 2:7, 10, 13; and further that others than Boaz would probably repulse her, 2:22; all this indicates a state of affairs in which the law that the poor be allowed to glean was not controlling the actions of men, nor even established. Furthermore, it cannot be argued that such treatment would be meted out to Ruth because she was a foreigner, although not to a Jewess, for we know that Ruth had practically become one of the Hebrews (cf. 1:16 ". . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"); and, *most important*, Deut. 24:19 says: "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in the field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go to fetch it: *it shall be for the stranger*, etc."⁵¹ Now it seems most likely that no Hebrew (or Jewish) writer, remembering all that this implies, could have written portraying a state of affairs so manifestly pre-Deuteronomistic as Ruth, unless he had lived in that period.

c) The absence of any mention of *Shebû'ôth*, or Pentecost, at the conclusion of the harvest (end of chap. 2) indicates, as did the failure to mention the Passover in chap. 1, that the writer did not know this festival, and hence must have lived before the introduction of the Deuteronomistic law, at which time alone it is conceivable that *Shebû'ôth* was not celebrated.

d) In 4:5, 10 Ruth is considered a part of the property of Elimelech and Mahlon to be acquired with it. This discloses a state of affairs that is again pre-Deuteronomistic—is, indeed, confined to the earliest times. No writer not living at a time in which the state of society represented in Ruth was not long past could have presented a picture of the life of the Hebrews of this period so faithful and true as this touch and allusion to the drawing off of the shoe in 4:6 show it to be. Such a time must have been pre-Deuteronomistic.

e) Finally, the absence of objection to the intermarriage of an Israelite with a Moabitess is clearly early. Wellhausen pointed out⁵² that this absence of hesitancy to speak of David's ancestor as having

⁵¹ Cf. also the treatment prescribed toward strangers in Deut. 1:16; 10:18; 23:7; 24:14 ff.; Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Mal. 3:5.

⁵² Bleek-Wellhausen, *Einleitung*⁴, p. 205.

married a Moabitess might be regarded as a ground for considering the book pre-Deuteronomistic. To be sure, he considered such a dating incorrect because of the supposedly late diction, etc. But these obstacles being removed, this argument alone is practically conclusive for an early date. It cannot be argued that the absence of objection to intermarriage is purposely manipulated to show that unions with foreign women were permissible (which is considered by many to be the object of the book) since it can be shown that this would not at all be proved.

Taken all together, therefore, the language, graphic peculiarities, and general character of the Book of Ruth indicate very strongly—indeed in the opinion of the author, unmistakably and irrefutably—that it must be of early date. The vigor and consummate art of the book are of so high an order that a late date on this ground alone is practically impossible. Even Cheyne, who would make all of Hebrew literature as late as flimsy show of argument will permit and who believes Ruth late on linguistic grounds, is compelled to admit “that the story of Ruth was written before the living impulses of Jewish literature had been choked by the growing influence of legalism.” This influence was, however, already present at the time of P and D, and accordingly so fresh and naïve a story as this must be assigned to the pre-Deuteronomistic period at least.

And if written in this early period, our book must have been a part of the great history of JE and ultimately of the popular stories of J. The scene of the story is Bethlehem-Judah, and it must have formed one of a cycle of David-Bethlehem stories.

With Ruth originally a part of J, it is easily possible to account for its present form as a separate book. When the Deuteronomistic editing (which combined Deuteronomy with the JE history and gave form as separate books to Judges and Samuel) took place, the story of Ruth, which probably preceded the account of events related in Samuel, was left without a definite place, together, perhaps, with other material. Since, however, the story of Ruth was fraught with special interest and importance because of its relation to King David, the account was made a special book by itself.

Now in this form, separated from its original context, the book opened very abruptly. Accordingly a few words were added at the

beginning to indicate the date of the events related. Thus the words *ויהי בימי שפט השופטים*, "And it was in the days when the Judges exercised authority," are accounted for. The first word *ויהי* shows that there was a distinct recollection of some original connection⁵³ in which the book stood. The present introductory form refers to the period of the Judges as something past. This is but natural, since these words were added at a point of time subsequent to that period. This introduction, also, corresponds exactly to the Deuteronomistic frame-work and additions of Judges, which likewise refer to the events of that book as long since past.

Besides this editorial change there are, I believe, three other additions in our book, which are due to the redaction of D and P (*R^d* and *R^p*). The first two of these additions are: *להקים שם-יהמת*, *על-נחלתו*, 4:5, and the same words plus *שם-יהמת* *ולא-יכרת* *במעם אחיו ומשער מקומו*, 4:10. These additions also Professor Bewer⁵⁴ considered to be not original portions of the book, with the exception of *על-נחלתו* in vss. 5 and 10, but he believed the glosses were inserted by a late reader or scribe. It is better, however, in the opinion of the present author, to consider these additions as due to Deuteronomistic editing in keeping with Deut., chap. 25, like the levirate allusions in Gen., chap. 38, which are also to be considered as by *R^d* (cf. note 42 to page 293).

The third passage which is a later addition to Ruth is the genealogy, 4:18-22. As stated above, this genealogy has been regarded by a number of scholars as not an integral part of the book. Its affinity with genealogies of P in the Pentateuch is unmistakable; its language and formularistic character are identical. Even in Chronicles the genealogies do not bear the same close resemblance to those of P. This leads to the conclusion that the genealogical table in Ruth is an addition by the authors of P themselves. The

⁵³ Budde, *ZAT*, XII, 1892, pp. 43 ff., believed this was the "*Midrash to the Book of Kings*." All that is true, however, of Ruth as a part of the Midrash would be equally, or rather much more, true of the book as a part of the early history J(E).

⁵⁴ *Theol. Studien u. Kritiken*, 1903, 2, "Die Leviratsehe im Buch Ruth," pp. 328, 332. Professor Bewer believes here that no levirate marriage is intended, the additions being glosses on the basis of Deut. 25:6-10 because of the similarity of ceremony. Likewise in *AJSL*, 20, 3, April, 1904, "The Goel in Ruth 4:14, 15," pp. 205 f., he regarded these words as glosses but made by friends of Ezra and Nehemiah to make it appear that Boaz was by law compelled to marry Ruth.

genealogy in I Chron. 2:10-12 (=Ruth 4:19b-22a) is thus copied from Ruth and modified to serve the purpose of the Chronicler.⁵⁵

If, now, it is granted that 4:5, 10 contain Deuteronomistic expansions, and 4:18-22 are an addition of P, it is quite out of the question to suppose that our book was written as late as the post-Exilic period.

Accordingly not only the language and general tone of Ruth, but also the presence of Deuteronomistic expansions and an addition by P prove that the story is of early origin.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

With an early date for the Book of Ruth the question of its purpose practically answers itself. Traces of Deuteronomistic editing practically prove that the book was once a part of the early Hebrew history J(E).⁵⁶ The story of Ruth must thus have been one of a number of stories about Bethlehem and the family of David. The purpose of the book is, therefore, not at all different from that of any other history.

There has, however, been a considerable number of scholars who have considered our book to be a fiction founded, perhaps, on some old legend, but none the less a fiction. As evidence of this the names in the book are cited. Thus **נעמי**, **מהלון**, **כליון**, **ערפה**, and even **רות** and **בעז** are supposed to be fictitious names formed by the writer to illustrate the characters of his story. Very many have thought the names **מהלון** and **כליון**, which are supposed to mean "sickness" (**הלה**), and "consumption" (**כלה**), to allude to the early death of the sons thus named. **רות** has been variously explained as for **רעות**,⁵⁷ i.e., "female friend," from **רעה**, or (since the foregoing assumes the loss of an **ע** and this is not a usual phenomenon) as from the root **רוה**, "fill or sate," hence "she who satisfies." **בעז** has been explained as equal to **בו עז**, i.e., "in him is strength," in contrast to **מהלון** and **כליון**. But there is no proof or necessity that these were the meanings of the names.⁵⁸ In the case of **בעז** and

⁵⁵ This is likewise the view of Budde, *ZAT*, XII, p. 460. He does not, however, consider the genealogy a later addition and to be by P, since he believes the whole book a part of the Midrash to Kings.

⁵⁶ Cf. above and *AJSL*, July, 1911, pp. 298, 299.

⁵⁷ Cf. the Syriac form of the name, **ܨܡܝ**.

⁵⁸ **מהלון** may have meant "sickness" or "weakness," but that it referred to the early death of the son so named is not a necessary conclusion. **כליון**, on the other hand, probably never meant "consumption." The root **כלה** means "to end, be complete,"

רִוּת, the etymologies and explanations given above are quite impossible. The real meaning and derivation of ancient names is very difficult to ascertain, and the idea that these names are fictitious is entirely unfounded. Oettli and Orelli, also, have considered the names authentic and the characters historic.

Recently Stucken,⁵⁹ followed by Cheyne⁶⁰ and Winckler,⁶¹ has thought Ruth to be a mythological legend applied to the history of David's ancestors. Winckler⁶² especially has attempted to work out the theory that Ruth is a representation of Tamar (Gen., chap. 38) = Ištar and that the other characters are mythological impersonations. Even in Naomi under the name of Mara 1:20 = מֵרָה, Winckler has managed to see a mythological personage, a representation of Tamar, by saying that מֵרָה or מֵרַת was not the original name but תַּמָּר, a similar form of the imperfect, which is the usual Old Testament name of Ištar according to him. By means of various manipulations of letters and names Winckler has read a complete system of mythology into the book. But that these manipulations and identifications are true requires as much imagination to believe as Winckler exercised in making them. Professor Haupt in his interpretation of Ruth⁶³ rejected the attempt to see any mythology in the book.⁶⁴

and hence "completion" is as probable, at least, as "consumption" for the meaning. It may have referred to the fulfilment of a vow or the like, and have been a usual Hebrew name. Professor Haupt has pointed out to the author that כְּלִיִּן may mean "perfection" (like מַכְלִיל), comparing תְּכֵלֶה, etc. With regard to מַחֲלוֹן, "sickness," Dr. Haupt questions whether a mother would be apt to name her child thus, as it would be a bad omen. He has also pointed out that מַחֲלוֹן may be connected with חָלִי and

חֲלִיָּה. Syriac سَك means "sweet," Arabic حَلَى, حُلُو, حَلِي, "candy," etc.

This would make מַחֲלוֹן mean "sweet, sweetness"; cf. the present "honey" applied to children as a term of endearment.

⁵⁹ *Astralmythen*, p. 110.

⁶⁰ Art. "Ruth," *Encycl. Bibl.*

⁶¹ *Altoriental. Forschungen*, III¹, "Rut," pp. 65 ff.; cf. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*³ (KAT), Berlin, 1903, I, p. 229, n. 2.

⁶² *Altoriental. Forsch.*, loc. cit.

⁶³ In the Old Test. Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University, 1904-5.

⁶⁴ H. Zimmern in Schrader's KAT³, II, p. 438, very moderately states that the figures of the biblical patriarchal history, etc., may be direct reflexes (*directe Nachwirkung*) of Babylonian gods and that Ruth among other personages may go back to the Babylonian Ištar in some features (*einzelne Züge*) with more or less probability (*mit mehr oder weniger Wahrscheinlichkeit*). In spite of Stucken and Winckler's far-reaching assumptions and assertions (*sehr weitgehende Aufstellungen*, n. 1), Zimmern does not seem to consider the whole subject as more than a possibility; his reserve in entering upon a presentation of the various features (*ohne in Einzelerörterungen desselben einzutreten*) may fairly be taken as an indication of his position on this subject and that he saw "*weniger Wahrscheinlichkeit*" in the case of Ruth.

Indeed, if the book were at bottom nothing but a myth, none of the manifold purposes for which various scholars have believed the book to have been written would be possible, since a mere fiction would have had little or no weight or effect on the practical-minded Hebrews. An excellent summary of many of the views of the purpose of Ruth will be found in Reuss, *Geschichte der heiligen Schriften des Alten Testaments*², § 243. It is desired to take up here the most important and recent of the views advanced and point out the reasons for their untenability, and particularly so with regard to the view which sees in Ruth a protest against the rigor of Ezra and Nehemiah in the matter of marriage.

1. Bertholdt⁶⁵ and Benary⁶⁶ advanced the theory that Ruth was written to inculcate the duty of the levirate marriage by showing the happy results which followed Boaz' marriage with Ruth. Such a purpose is, however, quite impossible, since not only is this marriage not a levirate marriage, or brother-in-law marriage, but it is not even a Niyoga marriage, or one with the next-of-kin to raise up seed to a dead relative.⁶⁷ There is in Ruth no purpose of raising up seed to the dead husband of Ruth, nor yet of Elimelech.⁶⁸ The only institutions to which reference is made in our book are the ancient customs of redemption of an estate by relatives, and the inheritance of women as property, which make it incumbent upon the heir or redeemer of the property to accept as wife or otherwise provide for the wife (or wives) of the dead relative. It is the right and obligation of the redeemer upon which the story of Ruth is based,⁶⁹ not the levirate.

2. Reuss believed that the book was written after the fall of Samaria and had for its purpose the furtherance of a reunion of the remnants of the Northern Kingdom, left behind in Ephraim, with the Southern Kingdom by showing that there could be no patriotic objections to a reunion on the part of the Ephraimites, as the Davidic dynasty in the South was really Ephraimitic. The connection with

⁶⁵ *Einleitung*, pp. 2331 ff.

⁶⁶ *De Hebraeorum Leviratu*, Berolini, 1835.

⁶⁷ As Driver, *LOT*¹⁰, p. 454, and n. †, believes. Reuss, *Geschichte der heil. Schrift*², etc., p. 314 below, rightly saw that there is no levirate nor Niyoga in the book.

⁶⁸ Ruth 4:5, 10, and 1:13 are the passages upon which the view of a levirate marriage is founded. But in 4:5, 10, the reference to raising up seed is a later addition, and in 1:13 there is no such idea.

⁶⁹ Cf. chaps. 3 and 4. The acquirement of Ruth as property in chap. 4 represents an ancient custom essentially identical with the old Arabic custom, against which practice Qorân IV, 23, 26 is aimed.

Ephraim came about, according to Reuss, through Elimelech and his sons Maḥlon and Chilion, who were Ephrathites (1:2) = Ephraimites. Now Ruth was Maḥlon's wife, and when she became the wife of Boaz, the offspring of this marriage, Obed, was not alone heir, through Boaz, of Judah, but was also, legally, through Maḥlon, the successor or heir (*Rechtsnachfolger*) of an Ephraimite; and thus the descendants of Obed, the sons of Jesse, i.e., the dynasty of David, are really Ephraimitic.

The first and chief reason why Reuss's theory is impossible is because אֶפְרַתִּי (1:2) does not mean Ephraimite: it is merely a coincidence that אֶפְרַתִּי is the *nomen gentilicium* of the noun אֶפְרַתָּה, as well as of the noun אֶפְרַתִּים. In Ruth here, Ephrathite is intended; cf. אֶפְרַתָּה, 4:11. With this, the basis of Reuss's view is withdrawn, as has been pointed out by a number of writers.⁷⁰

Secondly, even if it were true that Ephrathite = Ephraimite, it would still be impossible that Ruth should have been written to pave the way for a reunion of the two kingdoms by showing that there could be no objection on the part of the Ephraimites. Such an objection would still exist. Reuss in his explanation represents the objection on the part of the Ephraimites as due to the fact that the Davidic house was a foreign one with no legal claim to, or connection with, Ephraim. Ruth shows, says Reuss, that this dynasty was, through its ancestor Obed, not alone the natural heir of Judah, but the legal successor of Maḥlon, an Ephraimite. But this gives the Southern Dynasty only a legal title; and a legal claim the house of David always had, since originally the Northern Kingdom was just as much a part of Israel as the Southern. The Northern state, by revolting from the United Kingdom, did not destroy the legal title of the Davidic house. Consequently the Book of Ruth could not have removed the objections of the Ephraimites, granting they had any at that time, and even granting Ephrathite = Ephraimite.

Thirdly, still admitting the foregoing, nobody from reading the book would ever suspect what the object of the author was. Orelli has very justly said,⁷¹ "Der politische Autor hätte seine Absicht so

⁷⁰ Cf., e.g., Bertholet, *Commentary on Ruth*, Introd., p. 51, 1); Nowack, *Commentary*, p. 183, 2.

⁷¹ *Protestant. Realencyclopädie*², XIII, art. "Ruth," p. 142. Cf. 3d ed. (1906), p. 267.

gut versteckt, dasz sie kaum jemand herausfinden mochte." Reuss's view has accordingly been rejected on all sides.

3. The view of Ludwig Köhler,⁷² that "the booklet of Ruth, for purposes of edification and apparently in a manner freely imaginative, depicts how Jahwe deprives a woman, Naomi, of all hope, how she bows herself to His will, and then how God answers all her prayers and repays her God-fearing resignation even with happiness," is rather a homiletical interpretation than the statement of a purpose of the book. In common with the old theologico-homiletical views that Ruth was written for moral purposes (to show the piety of Ruth and power of Yahweh, or to furnish an example of the proper behavior of mothers- and daughters-in-law toward each other,⁷³ Köhler's statement of what the book contains is rather a synopsis of a sermon on the lessons to be drawn from our book than a scientific statement as to the possible purpose of it.

4. Wellhausen⁷⁴ saw in Ruth a fiction tracing the descent of David to a heathen proselyte, in the manner in which in the Talmud there is a marked predilection for tracing the descent of the most notable Jewish families from heathen proselytes, manifesting itself in considering the most famous Scribes and Rabbis to be descendants of Sisera, Sennacherib, Nebucadnezzar, and Haman, for examples of which see in Tal. *Sanhedrin*, *Pereq. Heleq*. In this "*Tendenz*," however, Wellhausen saw only a theoretic interest in history as opposed to the "*Tendenz*"-theory as enunciated by Geiger, *Urschrift*, 1857, pp. 49 ff., upon which the view to be discussed below (6) is founded. Wellhausen's theory has failed to convince anyone but himself, it seems. It cannot be shown that the tendency of the Talmud to trace the origin of Jewish families to heathen proselytes existed previous to the Talmudic age (at least the third century A.D.). The Talmudic tendency must have had its origin in the undoubted fact that the early Hebrews were a mixed race, and that many heathens

⁷² In *Theol. Tijdschrift*, 1904, p. 472. His words are: "Das Büchlein Ruth stellt in erbaulicher Absicht und in wahrscheinlich vielfach freierfundener Weise dar, wie Jahwe einer Frau Naomi alle Hoffnung nimmt, wie diese sich . . . unter seine Hand beugt, und wie dann Gott . . . alle ihre Wünsche erfüllt und sie für ihre gottesfürchtige Ergebung sogar mit Glücke belohnt."

⁷³ The latter view is that of Noldenhawer, cited by Reuss, *Geschichte der heil. Schrift*,², etc., p. 313. Cf. *idem* for other similar views.

⁷⁴ In Bleek-Wellhausen, *Einleitung*⁴, p. 205.

became converted and entered "the congregation of the Lord." This the Rabbis knew, and such a book as Ruth kept the knowledge alive. Thus the tendency may have arisen; but the Book of Ruth is rather a foundation for it than an illustration of the practice.

5. A view of the purpose of the Book of Ruth that has frequently been propounded is that it was written to give some details of David's origin and family in addition to what is given in I Sam. Such information the genealogy 4:18-22 is supposed to supply. But this passage may be shown to be a later addition, and must be so regarded. The Book of Ruth as originally written gave very little information as to David's origin and family, for it scarcely mentions David (4:17b). Even with the genealogy the amount of information given about David and his immediate family is very meager. We cannot, therefore, believe that the book was written as a separate composition for the purpose of shedding light on David's origin.⁷⁵

6. The theory that has of recent years found the widest acceptance is the one which makes the Book of Ruth a polemic or protest against the rigor of the reform of Ezra and Nehemiah in the matter of intermarriage of Jews with foreign women.⁷⁶ The view is found stated in Geiger's *Urschrift*, 1857, pp. 49 ff.; it involves a date of composition as late as the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The dating alone makes this theory quite impossible;⁷⁷ but for other reasons as well it may be shown to be untenable. In view of the wide prevalence of the theory at present, a statement of the most important objections to it, apart from the fundamental impossibility on the ground of its date, seems advisable.

If Ruth had been written by the opponents of Ezra and Nehemiah in favor of liberality in the matter of intermarriage, one would expect the purpose to appear from the book. But no one could tell from the story that its purpose is such as is claimed: Orelli's criticism of Reuss's view of the object of Ruth applies equally well, *mutatis mutandis*,

⁷⁵ P. de Lagarde, *Orientalia*, II, Göttingen, 1880, p. 41, states that the statement in 4:18, viz., וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת דָּוִד, shows that the author of Ruth intended to indicate that the house of David was equivalent to that of Aaron. This reveals a purpose to aggrandize the house of David. Cf. also the theory advanced by Lagarde in *Mittheilung*, IV, Göttingen, 1891, p. 313, below.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Ezr.*, chaps. 9 ff.; *Neh.* 13:23 f.

⁷⁷ See above, pp. 7-16, equals the article of the author on "The Character, Contents, and Date of Ruth," *AJS*, July, 1911, pp. 291-300.

to this theory: "Der . . . Autor hätte seine Absicht so gut versteckt, dasz sie kaum jemand herausfinden mochte." Ludwig Köhler⁷⁸ has also pointed out that the view that the book is a polemical pamphlet is impossible because no trace of polemics appears in it. Professor Bewer,⁷⁹ likewise, saw the objection "that there is absolutely no indication of polemics in the book." To this Cornill⁸⁰ replies that a polemic or "*Tendenz*" should not be too coarse-fibered and obtrusive. Professor Bewer, also, replied to this very pertinent objection that the absence of polemics "might very well be an evidence of supreme art. The book would thus be all the more convincing." These answers, however, are not a refutation, nor even an answer to the objection. If a work is polemical, its object cannot be too obtrusive. Anything tending to make the position of the author more secure, and that of his opponent less forceful or impossible, is not only unobjectionable in a polemic, but a prime necessity. If one writes a pamphlet telling a most charming story, it may be "supreme art"; but if the story has absolutely no bearing on a certain vital issue, or a bearing so remote that even the sharpest intellects have difficulty in seeing any connection, of what use is such a story, be it ever so delightful, as a polemic? The same, too, is true of the "*Tendenz*." If the "*Tendenz*" is not in the book, how can anyone be expected to be influenced by it?

The advocates of this theory, however, point to certain features which are supposed to indicate the bearing of the Book of Ruth on the question of intermarriage. Bertholet⁸¹ and Nowack⁸² draw attention to the repeated reference to Ruth as *the Moabitess*, מואביטה (1:22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10), and that she herself speaks of herself as *a stranger* נכרית (2:10), which is supposed to be unusual emphasis of the fact that Ruth was a Moabitess and stranger. Now this stranger, the Moabitess, attains an exalted position in Israel by becoming the mother of Obed, the grandfather of King David. That a stranger should attain so high an honor in Israel is said to have been due to the blessing of Yahweh. From this, it is argued, the inference is to be drawn that Yahweh did not curse every marriage

⁷⁸ In Teyler's *Theol. Tijdschrift*, 1904, 2, pp. 458 ff.

⁷⁹ In *AJSL*, XX, April, 1904, p. 205 below.

⁸⁰ *Einleitung*, p. 159, § 22, Anm.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

with a foreign woman, and hence such marriages are permissible. In this consists the "*Tendenz*" of the book, and because of this it is believed that Ruth was written at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the question of intermarriage was being adjusted.

The assumption of a "*Tendenz*" on the foregoing basis is, I believe, entirely unjustified. It will be observed that the assumption is based upon the occurrence of **הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה** six times and **נָכְרִיָּה** once, as applied to Ruth. This is by no means an undue emphasis of the fact of Ruth's foreign origin, and is not even a frequent reference to this circumstance—at least not frequent enough to justify the conclusion that the happy outcome of this one marriage is to be construed as an argument for other marriages of the same sort and hence as a "*Tendenz*." And furthermore, when the text of the passages concerned is critically examined, it develops that of the six occurrences of **הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה**, the word is twice shown to be a gloss (2:2, 21) by the ancient versions—a fact that has thus far escaped notice or not been sufficiently considered.⁸³ This leaves but four cases in which the word is genuinely used, so that there is no undue emphasis laid upon the fact that Ruth is a Moabitess, as in each of these instances the adjective is necessary to the thought.—**נָכְרִיָּה** 2:10, too, lays no undue stress on Ruth's being a foreigner, since in the context in which the word is used, the sense is rather that of "stranger, unknown person" (a sense which preserves the more original meaning of the word⁸⁴) as the next verse, **הֵגֶר הֵגֶר**, etc., proves.

In this state of affairs there seems to be no justification for the "*Tendenz*"-theory. Only those who are looking for some ground for an unlikely theory could elaborate an ulterior motive from the few and necessary descriptions of Ruth. Orelli is right in saying: "Gegen die Annahme einer blossen Tendenz- und Lehrdichtung sträubt sich die naive Einfalt und Anmut der Erzählung."⁸⁵

However, even if we should grant that there may be some "*Tendenz*" in the Book of Ruth, as there is not, it would still be impossible

⁸³ In these two cases the word **הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה** is quite out of place in the Hebrew, as it is not necessary to the thought; and knowing the weakness of scribes for adding epithets and details on the basis of cases where there is a necessity for them, there can be no doubt that **הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה** is a gloss. A similar gloss not noted recently is **הַשְּׁבִיָּה**, 1:22; likewise **בְּשׂוּדָה מוֹאֵב**, 1:6, is such a gloss, I believe.

⁸⁴ Cf. **זָר**, "strange," then "foreign."

⁸⁵ *Realencycl.*³, XVII, Leipzig, 1906, art. "Ruth," p. 267.

to suppose the account to have been written as a protest against the rigor of Ezra and Nehemiah—a polemic advocating liberality in the matter of intermarriage. How could one reasonably argue that because a particular intermarriage resulted in a blessing to all concerned, such marriages were in general permissible? The exception only proves the rule; and nobody could thus legitimately argue from one case, and that too one that occurred under widely different conditions and circumstances. What was common practice and permissible at the time of the Judges was later forbidden; and to argue that because at that time Yahweh blessed one such marriage, even though it were the ancestors of King David, foreign marriages at any time, and particularly at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, were permissible, would be most illogical and unconvincing. Moreover, the number of such marriages with non-Hebrew women was large⁸⁶ in the early time, and to cite the case of the happy marriage of Ruth and Boaz, who lived long before even David (through whom it was that Ruth and Boaz receive their importance), when David and Solomon and many others had foreign wives in still later times and were censured therefore,⁸⁷ would have had as much effect on the mind of the people of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah as it would have now, i.e., none at all. This theory of the purpose of the book is illogical, and hence untenable.

The proof of the utter lack of cogency in the argument lies in the fact that the people themselves who at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah had taken foreign women to wife never denied that they had done wrong; they at once admitted this, and agreed to put away their foreign wives.⁸⁸ Those who clung to their wives did so in spite of their knowledge that their marriage with foreign women was not permissible or justifiable and without, indeed, trying to justify their course of action. There was really no person who did not feel the logic of Ezra's argument.⁸⁹

The reasons for this will be clear from a consideration of the cir-

⁸⁶ Cf. Judg. 3:6, 14 ff. (Samson); I Sam. 27:3; II Sam. 5:13 (David); I Kings 11:1 ff. (Solomon); etc.

⁸⁷ See the foregoing references in n. 86.

⁸⁸ Ezra 10:5, 12.

⁸⁹ Neh. 13:28 is not at all against this, as the son of Joiada clung to his alliance for personal and political ambition, undoubtedly.

cumstances in Judaea at that time. They were of a peculiar nature. The community at Jerusalem had just returned from the Captivity and become again established, and they were few in numbers.⁹⁰ If, now, many of the people intermarried with foreign women, it meant the extinction of the nation and race⁹¹—the second and third generations would no longer be Hebrews (Jews), but Ashdodites, Ammonites, and Moabites.⁹² The feeling at this time was intense and immediate action was imperative if the nation, race, and religion were to be preserved. Forceful measures were adopted to compel the priests and people to abandon their foreign consorts.⁹³ This action had its effect. The loyal Hebrews (Jews) clung to their race and their God, and so the people survived to this day.

Are we now to suppose that the very few bolder and powerful men, who at this juncture were traitors to the cause of Yahweh and chose to cling to their wives of foreign race rather than to their people and God, adopted the feeble method of writing or causing to be written a story of ancient days⁹⁴—the Book of Ruth? Could any composition, no matter how forceful, have had any effect against the vigorous policy of Ezra and Nehemiah? And are we to suppose that the Book of Ruth, which at most contains seven references to the fact that Ruth was a foreign woman and says not a word in favor of such marriages—are we to suppose that this book was written as a protest against Ezra and Nehemiah?

The theory, therefore, that Ruth was written as a campaign pamphlet or "*Tendenzschrift*" seems to reduce itself to an absurdity (*reductio ad absurdum*), and would, thus, be shown to be impossible. As was pointed out, the theory involves a late date, which renders it *hors de combat*. Lastly, if written according to the theory, it seems most certain that the book would never have been included in the Hebrew Scriptures. The memory of its purpose could not have died out, since the Scribes and Rabbis were the direct heirs of the traditions of Ezra and Nehemiah; and since they, later, determined which books should be considered sacred, they would surely have rejected Ruth.

⁹⁰ Ezra 9:8.

⁹¹ Ezra 9:14 f.

⁹² Neh. 13:23, 24.

⁹³ Ezra 10:9 to end; Neh. 13:24 f., 28, 30.

⁹⁴ The theory of Winckler and Cheyne that Ruth is a mere myth and yet was written as a protest against the rigorous policy of Ezra and Nehemiah seems singularly impossible when viewed in the light of the real events of this period.

There is, accordingly, no acceptable theory of the purpose of our book which has thus far been proposed. It has in fact no set purpose, any more than any other historical narrative. Moreover, if Ruth was originally a part of the great history of J(E), as I have shown, I believe, to be likely,⁹⁵ we need look for no purpose in our book beyond that which any episode in a history has.

⁹⁵ Above, pp. 14, 15, equals the paper of the author on "The Character, Contents, and Date of Ruth" in the July, 1911, number of *AJSL*, pp. 298 ff.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Louis Bernard Wolfenson was born January 4, 1882, and was brought up at La Crosse, Wisconsin. In November, 1887, he entered the primary grade of the schools of the city. In February, 1894, he entered the High School, from which he was graduated with honors in 1898. In October of the same year he entered the University of Wisconsin. In addition to completing the Classical Course, he satisfied the requirements for the Hebrew Group. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in the spring of 1901, and held a scholarship in Hebrew from 1898-1901. In June, 1901, the degree of B.A. (classical), in the Hebrew Group, was conferred upon him, and he was appointed Fellow in Hebrew for the year 1901-2. This year he spent in graduate study, following courses in Semitics under Dr. Kelly, and in Sanskrit under Professor Laird. In June, 1902, he was granted the M.A. degree and was reappointed Fellow for the ensuing year, which was spent in the study of Semitics under Dr. Kelly, of Hellenistic Greek under Professor Williams, and of Sanskrit and Historical Greek Grammar under Professor Laird. Having been reappointed Fellow for another year, he resigned and came to Baltimore to enter the Johns Hopkins University in the autumn of 1903. Here he followed courses in Semitics under Professors Haupt and Johnston and Doctors Blake and Rosenau, in Sanskrit and Indo-European Comparative Philology under Professor Bloomfield, in Egyptology under Professor Johnston, and in Tagalog under Dr. Blake. In January, 1904, he was appointed University Scholar in the Johns Hopkins University, and in June of the same year, Fellow in Semitics. In October, 1905, he was elected Fellow by Courtesy.

He published two papers in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. XXVII, entitled, "The Infixes *la*, *li*, *lo* in Tagalog," and "The *Pi'lēl* in Hebrew."

To all of his instructors he gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness.

